

**STATEMENT OF P. LYNN SCARLETT,  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR POLICY, MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET,  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
BEFORE  
THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS RECREATION, AND  
PUBLIC LANDS OF THE  
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES,  
CONCERNING  
H.R. 3283, FEDERAL LANDS RECREATION ENHANCEMENT ACT.**

**MAY 6, 2004**

---

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present the Department of the Interior's views on H.R. 3283, a bill to improve recreational facilities and visitor opportunities on Federal recreational lands by reinvesting receipts from fair and consistent recreational fees and passes, and for other purposes.

The Department of the Interior (Department) strongly supports H.R. 3283, and we along with the Forest Service would like to offer several technical amendments. The establishment of a permanent multi-agency recreation fee program would allow us to meet visitor demands for enhanced visitor facilities and services on our federal lands. The recreation fee program is vital to our ability to provide our visitors with a quality recreational experience. It significantly enhances the Department's efforts to support the President's initiative to address the deferred maintenance backlog at our National Parks and enables us to better manage other federal lands. H.R. 3283 would allow the agencies the certainty that is needed to better serve visitors by making long-term investments, streamlining the program, and creating more partnerships.

Our federal lands boast scenic vistas, breathtaking landscapes, and unique natural wonders. On these lands, many patriotic symbols, battlefields, memorials, historic homes, and other types of sites tell the story of America. Federal lands have provided Americans and visitors from around the world special places for recreation, education, reflection, and solace. The family vacation to these destinations is an American tradition. We want to ensure that the federal lands continue to play this important role in American life and culture. Fulfilling this mission requires that we maintain visitor facilities and services, preserve natural and historic resources, and enhance visitor opportunities. Such efforts require an adequate and steady source of funding that can quickly respond to increases in visitor

demand. Recreation fee revenues provide us important supplemental funding that better enables us to serve those using recreation amenities.

Although recreation fees date back to 1908, Congress first established broad recreation fee authority in 1965 under the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act. In enacting this authority, Congress acknowledged that the visitors to federal lands receive some benefits that do not directly accrue to the public at large and that charging a modest fee to that population is equitable to the user and fair to the general taxpayer. In 1996, Congress took that idea one step further when establishing the Recreation Fee Demonstration (Fee Demo) program for the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Fish and Wildlife Service), and the U.S.D.A. Forest Service (Forest Service). During the 105<sup>th</sup> Congress, a House Appropriations Committee Report noted that the Fee Demo program was developed in direct response to the federal agencies' concern over their growing backlog maintenance needs. The Fee Demo program allowed participating agencies to retain a majority of recreation fees at the site collected and reinvest those fees into enhancing visitor facilities and services. This authority was deliberately broad and flexible to encourage agencies to experiment with their fee programs. Congress has demonstrated its support of the Fee Demo program by extending the program seven times and expanding the program by lifting the initial one hundred site limit per agency.

H.R. 3283 reflects the lessons we have learned in implementing the Fee Program over the last eight years by creating a permanent multi-agency recreation fee program that balances the desire to restrict authority only to sites where an investment is made in visitor facilities or services with the need to provide enough flexibility to meet the changing recreation demands of our visitors. We would like to share our views on some of the key provisions of this bill as well as some of our observations about recreation activity on federal land.

### **A Multi-Agency Permanent Recreation Fee Program**

We strongly agree with H.R. 3283's creation of a multi-agency permanent recreation fee program. The Department has found that the pattern of recreation on our federal lands has changed dramatically. National Parks continue to be a destination favorite for American families. However, more than ever, Americans also are choosing to recreate on lands managed by other federal agencies, such as BLM and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Since 1985, recreation demand has increased approximately 65 percent on BLM lands and 80 percent on National Wildlife Refuges. Over the same

time period, the Bureau of Reclamation estimates an increase 12.5 percent or 10 million recreation visits for a total of 90 million visits to their 288 lakes. With this increase in visitation is an increase in visitor demand for adequate visitor facilities and services. Because many of our visitors do not distinguish among federal land management agencies, many expect to find the same amenities typically provided at National Parks, including hosted campgrounds, permanent toilet facilities, and potable drinking water. This increase in visitor use on these other federal lands also creates a greater need to expend funds to protect natural and cultural resources—the resources that are often the very reason visitors are drawn to the particular site. A permanent multi-agency recreation fee program allows each agency to respond to the needs of the visiting public.

Many lands, regardless of which agency manages them, display similar features in terms of recreation activities, amenities, and visitation levels. For example, Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (NCA) managed by the BLM has striking similarities to Arches National Park managed by NPS and to Sedona Recreation Area managed by the Forest Service. Both Red Rock Canyon NCA and Arches National Park were created to protect their unique geological features and offer visitors world-class rock-climbing, a visitor center, book store, toilet facilities, and picnic areas. Both sites charge a modest recreation fee, a majority of which stays at the site to enhance facilities and services. As in other BLM sites, visitation at Red Rock Canyon NCA has increased substantially in recent years. Visitation increased 5.5 percent from 761,445 recreation visits in FY 2001 to 803,451 recreation visits in FY 2003.

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Assateague Island National Seashore both protect exceptional beaches, maritime forests, saltwater marshes, wild horses, Atlantic flyway and migratory bird sanctuaries, and cultural resources. These sites offer visitors similar amenities such as a visitor center, a bookstore, toilet facilities, observation decks, and hunting blinds. In FY 2003, the park received approximately 2 million recreation visits on its 39,723 acres while the refuge received approximately 1.5 million recreation visits on its 14,062 acres. The park has two entrance stations, and the refuge has one entrance station and several public boat landings. Both sites charge a modest recreation fee, a majority of which stays at the site to enhance facilities and services. To accommodate visitors' enjoyment of both sites and to minimize fee layering, the park and the refuge have entered into a reciprocal fee agreement. A visitor who purchases a single visit entry or a site specific annual pass at either the refuge or park or holds a National Parks Pass or a Federal Duck Stamp can enter either site for no additional fee.

	<b>Assateague Island National Seashore (NPS)</b> <i>Virginia and Maryland</i>	<b>Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge (FWS)</b> <i>Virginia</i>
<b>Features</b>	Ocean, beaches, dunes, maritime forest, inlets, salt water marshes, estuaries, wild horses, Atlantic flyway and migratory bird sanctuary, submerged and land based cultural resources – shipwrecks, former U.S. Coast Guard Station	Ocean, beaches, dunes, maritime forest, inlets, salt water marshes, estuaries, wild horses, Atlantic flyway and migratory bird sanctuary, land based cultural resources – Assateague Island Lighthouse
<b>Amenities</b>	Visitor Center Toilet Facilities Bookstore Observation Decks Hunting blinds Nature trails Bicycle Trails Interpretive waysides Canoe rental Lifeguards Bathhouse Campground Picnic areas	Visitor Center Toilet Facilities Bookstore Observation Decks Hunting blinds Nature trails Bicycle Trails Interpretive Waysides Wildlife Loop Drive
<b>Activities</b>	Swimming, Beachcombing, Surfing, Fishing, Crabbing, Hiking, Bicycling, Over sand driving, Wildlife Observation, Birdwatching, Photography, Deer/waterfowl hunting, Guided Ranger Programs, Environmental Education, Canoeing, Kayaking, Camping, Picnicking, Horseback riding,	Swimming, Beachcombing, Surfing, Fishing, Crabbing, Hiking, Bicycling, Over sand driving, Wildlife Observation, Birdwatching, Photography, Deer/waterfowl hunting, Guided Ranger Programs, Environmental Education, Canoeing, Kayaking, Picnicking, Interpretive Bus Tour
<b>FY 2003 Revenue</b>	\$1,014,043	\$696,750
<b>FY 2003 Visits</b>	2,001,072	1,466,463
<b>Site Acres</b>	39,723	14,062
<b>Access Points</b>	One entrance at north, one at south (operated by Chincoteague NWR)	One entrance station, several public boat landings – no fee
<b>Current Entrance/Use Fee</b> Both units accept each others annual passes as well as the National Park Pass and Federal Duck Stamp	\$10 per vehicle (7 days) \$3 per person – by foot/bicycle (7 days) \$20 Annual pass \$70 Annual Off Road vehicle permit \$20 Camping (reservation system) \$16 Camping (off season, no reservation)	\$10 per vehicle (7 days) \$15 Federal Duck Stamp \$15 Annual pass \$70 Annual Off Road vehicle permit  \$20 Archery and firearm permit \$ 5 Hunt application fee

As with some National Parks, recreation fees can represent a substantial contribution to a FWS or BLM site's total budget. In Moab, Utah, recreation fees contribute over 69 percent of the total recreation budget. Recreation fees total \$500,000 while the recreation resource management appropriations total \$196,000. In Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, recreation fees totaled approximately 40 percent of that refuge's base budget in FY 2003. Chincoteague collected just over \$650,000 in recreation fee revenues and its base budget and maintenance project money was approximately \$1,655,500 that year.

### **A Permanent Multi-Agency Recreation Fee Program that is Limited to Areas that Provide Enhanced Facilities or Services**

We understand that our visitors seek a broad range of experiences when they choose to visit their federal lands and that a successful recreation fee program would enable us to offer these recreation options to the public. H.R. 3283 would provide this opportunity by limiting the program to areas where the visitors are provided enhanced facilities and services. Some visitors, for example, choose our federal lands because they want a unique individualized experience with nature – they seek out areas where they can camp under the stars at undeveloped sites, hike alone along a river, and enjoy the solitude. These visitors do not mind carrying all of their food in and all of their garbage out, and they would prefer areas that do not have picnic tables, toilet facilities, or visitor centers. Even under the broad authority of the Fee Demo program:

- 89 percent of BLM sites do not charge Fee Demo fees;
- 78 percent of FWS sites open to visitation do not charge Fee Demo fees;
- 75 percent of all Forest Service sites do not charge Fee Demo fees; and
- 40 percent of all NPS sites do not charge Fee Demo fees.

In contrast, we understand that other visitors enjoy a more structured recreation experience. These visitors enjoy viewing interpretive films, attending lectures about geology, history and culture at a visitor center or museum, and riding trams or other types of transportation to see the sites. Their preferred lodging is a developed cabin or hotel. For these reasons, these visitors often choose to visit destination National Parks.

Still other visitors prefer a little bit of both experiences. These visitors often visit areas managed by one of many different agencies, including the BLM, FWS, and the Forest Service. These visitors enjoy a less structured experience and more direct interaction with the land and its unique resources, but

still want certain facilities, such as toilet facilities, interpretive exhibits, boat ramps, and developed parking areas. Other areas that appeal to these visitors are the popular weekend destinations that are located near major urban centers. Because of the sheer number of visitors at these locations, the need for visitor services increases. Such services include increased medical and emergency services, increased maintenance of toilet facilities and trails, and greater protection of natural, cultural, and historic resources. Modest recreation fees that primarily stay at the site of collection make such enhanced facilities and services possible.

To ensure that the Recreation Fee Program enhances the recreation experience for our visitors, BLM and FWS have made a commitment not to charge basic or expanded recreation fees:

- At areas with no facilities or services;
- For persons who are driving-through, walking-through, or hiking through federal lands without using the facilities or services;
- For undesignated parking; and
- For overlooks or scenic pullouts.

Through the Interagency Recreation Fee Leadership Council (Fee Council), which was created in 2002 to facilitate coordination and consistency among high level officials of the Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Department also identified seven principles critical to a successful fee program. These guiding principles indicate that fees should be: 1) beneficial to the visiting public; 2) fair and equitable; 3) efficient; 4) consistent; 5) implemented collaboratively; 6) convenient; and should 7) provide for accountability to the public. The Department has committed to applying these guiding principles to any administrative and legislative effort concerning the recreation fee program.

Toward this end, all agencies have administrative processes to limit the expansion of the program to areas where the visitors are provided enhanced facilities and services. For BLM, areas with entrance or use fees must first be designated a Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). These designations are made in land-use plans and require publication in the Federal Register, environmental analysis and public participation. Any change in nationwide fees, including those that impact commercial, competitive, and organized groups requires BLM to publish notice in the Federal Register. For changes to Recreation Use Permits, BLM provides opportunities for the public, user groups and gateway communities to get involved when establishing or designating a fee area or establishing fees. Every addition or modification to the fee program in the FWS requires the

development of a proposal and approval by the Director.

In the Cascade Resource Area that spans 169,400 acres, BLM only charges an entrance fee at one 550 acre area with developed recreation, the Wildwood Recreation Site. Thus, visitors who seek a more natural experience and do not wish to use facilities and services can recreate free of charge in over 99 percent, or 168,850 acres, of the Cascade Resource Area. Those who choose to use the facilities and services at the Wildwood Recreation Site, which include a learning center, the Cascade Streamwatch interpretive trail featuring an in-stream fish viewing window, a wetlands boardwalk trail, 2.5 miles of paved trails, two large group picnic shelters, and an athletic field, pay a modest \$3 per vehicle per day fee, \$10 for an annual site pass, or a group facility fee. Visitors who walk-in or bike-in and school groups can use the Wildwood Recreation Site free of charge. Although construction of most of the facilities was paid for out of other funds, just as it is in many National Park Service sites, recreation fees provided the site with \$37,000 in FY 2003, a modest, but significant contribution to the maintenance and upkeep of the facilities. These services, along with environmental education and interpretive programs, enhance the visitor experience and would not be possible without the recreation fee program.

At Moab, Utah, BLM manages 1.8 million acres. Portions of these lands consist of dramatic geologic structures, and canyons through which the Colorado River cuts. The area has become a premier destination for mountain bikers, campers, rock climbers, and off-road vehicle enthusiasts. To provide opportunities for these visitors, BLM has constructed and manages around 400 campsites, groomed and marked miles of trails with signage, provided toilet facilities, and other amenities. These sites attract over 1.6 million visitors annually. The recreation fees charged at these sites generate over \$500,000, comprising two-thirds of the recreation management budget for these areas. At another area near Moab, BLM operates under a joint agreement to provide biking, camping, and off-road vehicle opportunities in an area that includes BLM and State Lands. Through a recreation fee, the partners generate over \$250,000, which enables them to offer trails, toilets, signage, campgrounds, paved parking, and other amenities. Other BLM areas are open to recreation, free of charge for visitors.

These areas abut Arches National Park and Canyonlands National Park, where entry fees are charged. The two parks have 94 campsites, small amounts of OHV recreation opportunities and offer educational and interpretation at the visitor centers and around the parks. The NPS, BLM and Forest Service jointly participate with a County association in operating a downtown visitor center in the

heart of Moab.

**A Permanent Multi-Agency Program that Provides for Standardized Recreation Fees, Allows for Development of a Streamlined Pass System, and Minimizes Fee Layering**

H.R. 3283 would standardize recreation fees and provide the authority to create a streamlined pass system that allows for creative options based on visitor demand. In working administratively to improve the recreation fee program, the Department has found that the issues of standardizing recreation fees across agencies, creating a streamlined and sensible pass system, and minimizing fee layering - or what might better be thought of as tiered fees - are all interrelated. Historical fee definitions in the LWCF Act and differences among agencies in legislative fee authorities have led the agencies to develop slightly different definitions of what activities are covered by “entrance” fees and those covered by “use” fees. The result has been that, at some sites, a use fee was established rather than an entrance fee, and at other sites, an additional use fee was charged for the primary attraction of the site when the activity should have been covered by an already-paid entrance fee. The lack of consistency among and within agencies has led to visitor confusion and some expression of frustration about fee layering and the related issue of when the Golden Passes established under the LWCF Act and the National Park Passport may be used.

In the Department’s testimony before this Congress during the 107th Congress, we proposed addressing these concerns by creating a new system of “basic” and “expanded” recreation fees that would be consistently applied across all agencies and would minimize fee layering by ensuring that the basic fee covers the primary attraction of the site. Under this system, restrictions would be put in place to ensure that the visiting public is not charged if the agency is not making a certain level of investment in visitor facilities or services. H.R. 3283 contains such important provisions.

The Department supports the provisions in H.R. 3283 that would allow for the streamlining of a multi-agency pass and the creation of regional multi-entity passes with a standardized package of benefits. The visiting public is interested in having a variety of pass options. Multi-agency and regional passes can provide visitors, including nearby residents, with convenient and economical ways to enjoy recreation on federal lands. Passes also can serve as a means to educate the American public about their federal lands and available recreational opportunities. Because of the lack of standardization of fees, however, some confusion has resulted from the existing pass system. Visitors should be able to expect and receive the same amenities for their pass regardless of which agency



manages the site they are visiting.

The Department and USDA have moved forward administratively to address these issues, where possible. Although we are retaining the LWCF terminology, the agencies are making adjustments to standardize the classification of fees to decrease visitor confusion about the passes and minimize fee layering. For example, the Forest Service has expanded and clarified the benefits of the Golden Passes to include 1500 additional sites. The previous pass policy at those sites was extremely confusing: the Golden Eagle Pass was not accepted, Golden Age and Access passholders were given a 50 percent discount, while a regional pass, like the Northwest Forest Pass, was accepted in full. NPS is evaluating whether passes could be accepted at an additional 30 sites that currently do not accept passes for the primary attraction. BLM has evaluated all of its sites and is now accepting the Golden Eagle Pass at 12 additional sites.

The Department is streamlining the recreation fee system. Our experience has shown that eliminating all fee-tiering is neither fair nor equitable, especially for specialized services such as camping, reservations, enhanced tours, or group events. The notion behind charging a fee beyond the basic recreation fee is that certain recreation activities require additional attention by agency staff or involve costs that should not be borne by the general public through taxpayer funds or by the rest of the visiting public through the basic recreation fee. The system must balance fairness and equity principles by carefully considering the relationship between who pays and who benefits.

Another important consideration is fee levels. The Department is committed to ensuring access to all visitors. Recreation fees represent a tiny percentage of the out-of-pocket costs that an average family spends on a typical vacation. Recreation fees are reasonable in comparison to those charged for other recreational activities. For example, in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, a family of four pays \$20 for a seven day pass to both Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park. In contrast, in Jackson Hole, the same family pays \$27.50 for 2-3 hours of entertainment at a movie theatre.

### **A Permanent Multi-Agency Program That Ensures that a Majority of Recreation Fees Stay at the Site to Enhance Visitor Facilities and Services**

Visitor support of recreation fees is strong when the fees remain at the site for reinvestment into visitor facilities and services. H.R. 3283 would do this by ensuring that not less than eighty percent of the recreation fees collected remain at the site of collection. We believe that this is an essential

component of any permanent multi-agency recreation fee program. We understand that it is not only important to make these critical investments, but also to ensure that we communicate to the public how recreation fees are spent to enhance the visitor experience. Recreation fees are sometimes spent in ways that may not be apparent, but would be noticed by visitors if the investment did not occur. Recreation fees are spent on such services as maintaining and upgrading toilet facilities, trails, and parking lots. For example, at Moab, Utah, which receives over 1 million visitors annually, it costs BLM \$50,000 per year just to service the toilet facilities.

At the Lake Havasu Field Office in Arizona, BLM has replaced 50 leaking and deteriorating fiberglass outhouses with 36 block wall accessible restrooms. BLM also has installed 700 feet of riverbank block walls, which will help protect the newly constructed restrooms as well as stabilize the campsites' eroding shoreline. Recreation fees contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of these investments and will help ensure that the visiting public will be able to use these facilities for many years in the future.

The Fish and Wildlife Service has used fees to offer some unique opportunities to visitors consistent with the six priority recreation uses outlined in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 -- hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife observation, environmental education, and interpretation. At California's Modoc National Wildlife Refuge, the Fish and Wildlife Service used recreation fees to benefit hunters and photographers by replacing an old hay bale blind with a new wooden, more accessible hunting and photo blind, complete with access ramp. At the National Elk Refuge, the Fish and Wildlife Service collects an Elk hunt permit recreation fee of \$1 per hunter at the weekly hunter drawings in October, November, and December. These recreation fees are used to rent a fair pavilion building from the county to conduct refuge hunt orientation and permit drawings at the beginning of each hunting season. Hundreds of hunters attend each year. In addition, the modest recreation fee allows the Fish and Wildlife Service to purchase retrieval carts and sleds for the hunters' use and shooting sticks to encourage ethical hunting.

As public recreation grows in scope and form of recreation, increasingly, all of our land management agencies are meeting these needs. Sites that attract thousands of visitors each day and tens of thousands of visitors each year, must invest in sanitation facilities, parking, campgrounds, shelters, boat ramps, and other infrastructure that helps ensure access, safety, and resource protection so the very feature that attracts the visitor remains available for the future. Many BLM, Forest Service, FWS, and NPS sites share identical or similar characteristics, including significant infrastructure.

These sites vary – not by the agency label – but by the particulars of location. Sand Flats, in Moab, Utah, includes BLM lands and a single point of entry into canyon area trails and campgrounds. The Everglades National Park in Florida stretches over 1.5 million acres and has multiple points of access. Recreation fees are charged in some parts of the park and not others, much like the situation on BLM lands in Moab.

These and the many other important enhancements made possible by the recreation fee program are described in our annual Recreational Fee Demonstration Program report to Congress. All of these reports are available on <http://www.doi.gov/nrl/Recfees/RECFEESHOME.html>. The FY2003 annual report is currently in the final stages of review, and we expect to transmit it to Congress shortly.

### **Collaborative Partnerships with States, Counties, and Gateway Communities**

We view counties and gateway communities as potential partners in our effort to provide a quality recreation experience for our mutually-shared visitors. The Department supports the provisions in H.R. 3283 that would provide the Secretary authority to enter into collaborative partnerships with public and private entities for visitor reservation services, fee collection or processing services. This provision would allow us, among other things, to more vigorously seek out opportunities to engage gateway communities through the recreation fee program and is consistent with Secretary Norton's emphasis on cooperation and partnerships to achieve public goals.

It is critical that we recognize the positive impact the presence of recreation sites on nearby federal lands has on counties and gateway communities. According to a study entitled, *Banking on Nature 2002: The Economic Benefits to Local Communities of National Wildlife Refuge Visitation*, the more than 35.5 million visits to the nation's 540 refuges fueled more than \$809 million in sales of recreation equipment, food, lodging, transportation and other expenditures in 2002. The total for sales and tourism-related revenue plus employment income, \$1.12 billion in total is nearly four times the \$320 million that the National Wildlife Refuge System received in FY 2002 for operation and maintenance and over 300 times the \$3.6 million the FWS generated through the Fee Demo Program in that year.

The collaborative partnership approach recognizes that we can work together with gateway communities to promote tourism by providing a quality recreational experience to our shared visitors. One example of the type of partnership that could flourish through a collaborative agreement provision under a permanent recreation fee program is the Sand Flats Agreement entered into in 1994 by BLM

and the gateway community of Grand County, Utah, discussed earlier in this testimony. Sand Flats is a 7,000-acre recreational area outside Moab, Utah that includes BLM and state lands. It is highly popular, particularly with mountain bikers and off-highway vehicle users. In the early 1990s, its popularity increased so much that the BLM was no longer able to manage and patrol the area. Looking for a creative solution, BLM entered into a cooperative agreement with the county under which the county would collect recreation fees and use them to manage and patrol the highly popular recreational area. The county and its citizens have benefited from a more vigorous tourist trade; the BLM now has a signature recreation area; and visitors can safely enjoy the Sand Flats area. We believe that the Sand Flats Agreement is an excellent model of a mutually beneficial collaborative partnership and that the opportunity to craft these types of agreements exists across the country. Recreation revenues make up over 50 percent of the economy in Moab.

Other possible collaborative partnerships with states and local communities could be developed through the creation of regional multi-entity passes that would be authorized under H.R. 3283. Providing visitors and residents of nearby communities with a well-structured, appropriately priced, regional multi-entity pass would allow for benefits that could extend to other federal, state, and private entities. Recognizing that recreation areas and the visitors who enjoy them do not necessarily follow state boundaries, our experience has shown that regional multi-entity passes offer greater flexibility and can be tailored to meet identified recreational demands. One example of a successful regional pass is the Visit Idaho Playground (VIP) Pass, which covers all entrance and certain day-use fees at a variety of state and federal sites including those under the jurisdiction of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation, the Idaho Department of Commerce, the Bureau of Reclamation, Forest Service, NPS, and BLM.

During FY 2003, BLM, NPS, FWS, and the Forest Service worked cooperatively with the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department, the Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop an annual multi-agency day-use recreation pass for use in the Pacific Northwest. This annual pass became available this month and will be accepted at many public day-use fee areas in Oregon and Washington. Revenues will be used to operate and maintain key recreation facilities and services. The pass will sell for \$85 and includes the Golden Eagle Passport for \$65 and the Washington and Oregon Recreation Pass Upgrade for \$20.

As mentioned earlier in the testimony, the Department would like to offer several technical amendments to H.R. 3283, and we also understand that the Forest Service will be offering several

technical amendments in which we concur. We would appreciate the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee to discuss these issues in detail at a later date.

### **The Future of the Recreation Fee Program**

We have learned a great deal from our experience in administering the Fee Demo program and believe we are ready to translate that experience into a permanent recreation fee program. Delay could result in a lost opportunity to implement a more productive, streamlined recreation fee system, designed to enhance the visitor's experience. Establishing a permanent program does not mean the learning ends here. We support a dynamic recreation fee program that responds to new lessons learned and builds on success stories. We believe a recreation fee program created under H.R. 3283 would create such a dynamic program while providing the Department the certainty to make long-term investments, improve efficiencies, and initiate more partnerships.

Mr. Chairman, we would like to thank you for your interest in this issue and for the opportunity to express the Department's support of H.R. 3283. We also would like to take this opportunity to extend our gratitude to Congressman Regula, for introducing this important piece of legislation and for his critical role in the creation and extension of the Fee Demo program. We would like to extend an invitation to any interested members of the Subcommittee and Committee for a visit to a BLM, FWS, or NPS Fee Demo recreation site.